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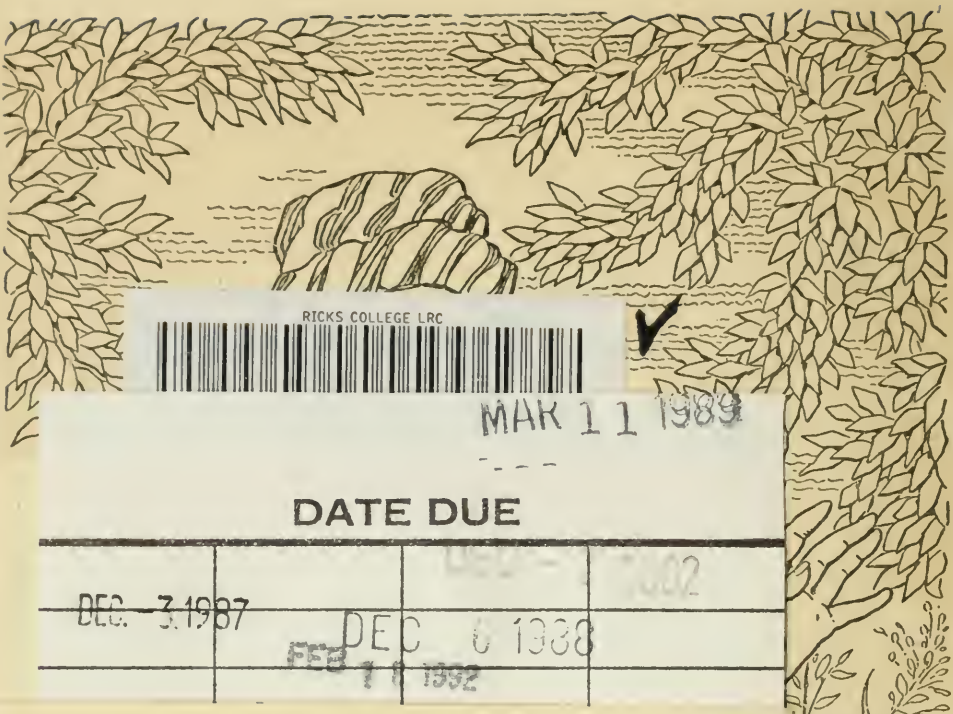

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Health, Healing, *and* Faith

Effect of Environment
How a Church Was Built by Prayer
Healing the Sick
Prayer for the Home
Prayer and the Bible

By

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VOLUME 8

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EFFECTIVE PRAYER

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FOREWORD

That prayers are answered nearly all the human race believe. But the subject has been beclouded and often made ridiculous by inconsistent superstitions.

This book is a modest attempt to clear up some of the errors. Its record is as accurate as impartial observation can make it. God is not bribed. Laziness cannot bargain with him. But the prayers of the righteous and of repentant sinners availeth much.

Desired ends are gained by prayer which cannot be gained by any other method. The daily experiences of devout persons establish that fact conclusively. The reasons and the methods which produce the results seem hidden, and they often bewilder the investigator. God's thoughts are far above our thoughts. But we can trust our daily experience far enough to retain our confidence in the potency of prayer. It is, therefore, a profitable and comforting study.

Russell H. Conwell.

Effective Prayer

I

EFFECTIVE PRAYER

Chapter I

Effect of Environment

THE fascinating history of events connected with the Baptist Temple, Philadelphia, through thirty-nine years must be recorded carefully to obtain the credence of those readers who live out of the locality. It may or may not be that the unusual demonstrations of power, seemingly divine, were not incited or influenced by the special environment. Yet the critical reader may reasonably inquire where these things occurred in order to determine the power of association on the form and effect of prayer.

The Baptist Temple is a somewhat imposing building on the corner of North Broad and Berks streets in Philadelphia. It is located almost at the geographical

center of Philadelphia, and eighteen squares north of the City Hall. The Temple is architecturally very plain, and the beautiful stained-glass windows are about the only ornaments in the great hall save, of course, the pipes of the great organ. The church is one hundred and seven feet front, and is one hundred and fifty feet in length. There is a deep gallery occupying three sides, with a chorus gallery, back of the pulpit, seating one hundred and fifty singers. There are three thousand and thirty-four opera chairs arranged in a semicircle, and every person in the congregation can see clearly the platform and chorus, and each normal worshiper can be heard from the pulpit.

The building itself is a testimonial to the effectiveness of sincere prayer. The Temple and the halls in the lower story, as it now stands, are far beyond the dreams of that little company of earnest worshipers who, in 1880, hesitatingly and embarrassed, began to build the small church at the corner of Berks and Mervine streets. They had no

wealthy or influential friends. They had but little money or property; they could pray, and that they did do unceasingly. Any man who tries to describe or explain fully how it came about that the Temple was built becomes bewildered in the complications, unless he covers the whole question by saying, "The Lord did it." In six years after the small church was completed the Temple was begun on Broad Street.

For seven or eight years after its construction the Temple was a Christian Mecca to which pilgrims seemed to come from all parts of the earth to kneel there in prayer. One Good Friday night, which was observed quite generally as a season of fasting and prayer, the writer entered by the side door the Temple at two o'clock in the morning, and in the dim light of two small gas jets, always left burning, he saw scores of people scattered through the church. Why that church had such a fascination for or preference with earnest seekers for the prayer-answering God none may explain.

All were kneeling separately in silent prayer. As they passed in and out there were in the line, going and coming, Chinamen, Europeans, Orientals, and Americans from distant states. Different denominations, Protestant, Catholic, Jew, colored and white, were often represented among the individual worshipers. They also came any night in the week at any hour and prayed silently for a while and then went silently out. The church was not locked, night or day, for fifteen years. People sought the place when they sought to find a locality which was especially near to the Lord. It may be that any place is as near to God as any other; and many think it only a sentiment, superstitious and foolish, to esteem one place above another in matters of effective prayer. But there does stand out the fact that, for some good reason, our Saviour did choose to pray in special localities, and his devout followers do now feel more deeply the soul's communion with God in certain favorable places. Why the Baptist Temple had such

worship as a sentimental matter brings forward the facts that the graves of the loved, the home of childhood, the trysting places, the old fireplace, or the churches where sainted parents worshiped are influential because of the suggestions which come with sacred memories. That fact is a strong agency in the awakening of tender and sacred emotions. But the Baptist Temple was new and could lay claim to none of those associations. Men and women with no religious habits, and some seemingly without devout inclinations, testified decidedly that whenever they visited the building they felt that they had entered into an atmosphere of special spiritual and sacred power. One soldier of the English army wrote an interesting letter in 1897, saying: "I do not recall any such impression before. I went into the church alone out of curiosity to look at its architectural design. But the moment I entered the side aisle I felt an indescribable pressure which made me desire to pray. I hurried out to the

street to escape the solemn impression. But twice since then I have been in the auditorium and each time some power seemed pressing me down to my knees." Whether that influence was the act of the Holy Ghost or not cannot be proven by any known formula of human reasoning, and hence it remains, as most of such questions do, a matter of faith. Some believe it was a divine presence which made itself felt there, and other good men do not believe the conditions were in any way unusual or unnatural. So many persons with uncontrolled imaginations, and others with their mental faculties weakened or distorted, often reported the most improbable visions and absurd revelations. Such characters, half insane or wholly deranged, testified in favor of Jesus to his face, and such have ever been present since in every genuinely spiritual movement. They would do less harm, of course, if they should declaim against him. So it was, and is, at the Baptist Temple. Those inconsistent, de-

ranged advocates of religion did often drive away permanently into the ranks of unbelievers the most sincere investigators. But a calm review of the testimonies concerning the occurrences which followed so clearly the petitions they offered in the Temple seems overwhelmingly to establish the claim, now held by so many thousand people, that the results of the prayers were but a cause and natural effect, as the prayers and results were infallibly related.

It is not claimed here, however, that the place had more influence with man or Christ than other places have had, or that any church or cathedral may be as sacred as Gethsemane or as the Mount of Transfiguration. The plain facts are recorded here with great caution and with a determination to keep conservatively within the truth and draw no unreasonable conclusions. It is a true statement, known to all the community, that many thousands of people have sought to pray in the Temple, believing that the boon their hearts desired would

be more sure to be sent if they asked for it within the Temple walls. Many persons have attended the church services on the Sabbath who have been so deep in prayer that they were unconscious of the music or the preaching. We must reassert that this fact is not recorded here to sustain any idea that the Temple is a sacred place above many other churches, cathedrals, and holy places, but to sustain the opinion that there are places more sacred than others to certain people, and that burdened hearts and minds would act wisely if they sought some such place when the answer to their prayer seems especially vital.

How a Church Was Built by Prayer

II

Chapter II

How a Church Was Built by Prayer

IN 1886 the small church at Mervine and Berks streets in the northern section of Philadelphia was crowded at every service. Children were turned away from every session of the Bible school, and tickets were issued a week in advance for the preaching services. The idea of moving to some larger place was discussed, as it was impossible to enlarge the building where it stood, because of the streets on three sides. Under those circumstances the people began to pray. A voluntary committee canvassed the small band of church members, asking each to pray for an opening to a larger work. It is often thought to be an easy thing to promise to pray for a person or for a cause. The promise to pray is too often made carelessly, and disinterested auditors often feel relieved of all responsibility when, instead of

a collection, they are let off with a request to pray for the advocated cause. But a sincere promise to pray for a cause carries with it the sincere purpose to work and to give self-sacrificingly. To say, "We do not ask for your money, but only that you pray for us," is a half-hypocritical request, because a real prayer can ascend only from a soul intent on doing. To agree to pray is a hearty promise also to do all in one's power to work with the Lord. Only the hearty worker can really pray. "The people had a mind to work," said Nehemiah, and God, seeing their zeal, responded to their appeal. The Lord answered in a way absolutely unforeseen. The salvation of the world cost a great sacrifice, and everywhere we see the results of a mysterious law that some must die that others may live, and that real happiness is ever gained at the cost of suffering.

A little child in Philadelphia opened the gates of the Temple by going down through death. She had been unable to get into the overcrowded Bible school one Sunday, and

she began to save her pennies to help secure some larger place. Little Hattie May Wyatt, living in a home near the church, was chosen of God to convey his answer to the pleadings of that church. How little could the afflicted parents realize what a great work their sweet, prattling Hattie was to do in her short life. When the sweet, pale face lay in the coffin amid the flowers and tears, her pocketbook, containing fifty-seven cents which she had saved, was handed to the minister. She was the messenger of Christ on earth before she became one in heaven! That fifty-seven cents was a sacred treasure, and at the next church meeting prayers went up to God, asking direction how to invest the first gift toward the larger accommodations. Providentially, the subject of the Scripture text was the narrative of the little child with his five barley loaves and two little fishes (John vi). What can Christ do with the gift of a little child? What can the spirit of God do with the seed of an oak? One patriarch led in prayer and earnestly

asked the Lord to "take these few pennies and build for us a temple." There were some in the assembly who, like the disciples at Galilee, said, "What can this little supply do among so many?" But the most part seemed inspired by the Holy Spirit with a faith that was immovable. The Lord then put a thought into the mind of Mr. John Baer, who owned a lot of land on the corner of Broad and Berks streets, to suggest to a member of the church that, as the people needed larger quarters, they ought to buy his lot and erect there a larger church. Mr. Baer did not know then that the church had only fifty-seven cents and that the church bulding they then occupied was still heavily mortgaged. Another church member heard of Mr. Baer's remark and, with the assurance of a faith unshakable, told Mr. Baer that if he would take fifty-seven cents as the first payment he felt sure the church would purchase it. Mr. Baer (a devout man) said that he would cheerfully accept the terms and that he would also not only

give back the fifty-seven cents, but would contribute one thousand dollars toward the first payment on the lot.

The church then purchased the lot and held another prayer meeting to determine the second time what to do with the Wyatt fifty-seven cents. It was unanimously decided to organize a "Wyatt Mite Society" to invest the money. There were to be fifty-seven children in the society, and each was to invest one of the pennies so as to secure the largest possible amount for the new church. It seems almost miraculous that wherever a child tried to sell the penny not one would buy it after hearing the story, but nearly all did give a liberal donation. One lady gave fifteen hundred dollars. Finally, the pennies all came back, were put in a coin frame, and kept as a sacred souvenir. Then joyful enthusiasm seized upon the people and hurried them along in many different enterprises for raising money. One Sabbath the pastor was overpersuaded to exchange with Doctor

Pierce of Mount Holly, and the joyful people presented the pastor, on his return, with a subscription list of ten thousand dollars. But to that account the practical and critical business man can answer that in any enterprise enthusiasm, hard work, and economy secure success almost invariably. So that even the matter of raising one hundred and nine thousand dollars by a people, all poor, industrious persons, may not be absolutely convincing to the skeptic who questions the personal interference of God in answer to the call of his children. But there was another phase of the history of that campaign which seems to be absolutely unaccountable on any other hypothesis but the direct and special interference of superhuman intelligence.

The number seven! It is called "a sacred number"; but why it has been credited with its peculiar significance is, perhaps, the effect of its mention so often in the Bible. The various theories, reasonable and fanciful, for the sacredness of the

number seven need not be rehearsed in a record of simple facts like these which this account preserves. But the daily appearance of the number seven in the evangelistic history of the Grace Church through the five years and two months before the large Temple was completed has never been explained by any solution other than by accrediting it to some power or law above the normal. The "five years' meetings" were only the usual meetings of the small church and no evangelistic or unusual endeavors were used, nor were any special methods tried. Evangelists of noted power sometimes addressed the church or gave sermons at the church in connection with some convention or association, but none of those instrumentalities seemed to affect the answers to the prayers of the people. The church sessions were simple, practical, social, and fully democratic. But the prayers were full of faith and feeling and were brief and direct. One evening, in a meeting held in a small basement room,

there were seven young people, strangers to one another, who stood up at the invitation to confess Christ. Each one stated that he had come under a strange and irresistible impulse unaccountable to him. Each asked the people to pray for his soul. That was the opening of the continuous stream of seven new converts each week for five years. That repetition of the number seven was not especially noticed until it had been repeated through several weeks. Then the people began to expect it, and during the active enterprises connected with the building of the new Temple it had a powerful effect on the courage and faith of that small company. As the years came and went with no change in that weekly number of fresh seekers after God, a feeling of awe held the worshipers to such an extent that when the seventh man or woman arose to come forward a deep sigh passed through the congregation. Sometimes the leader of the meeting paused or asked for "the hesitating one" if the full number did not at first

appear. But there was no prearrangement and no attempt or purpose to cease giving the invitation to confess Christ after the number seven had been reached. The church was too deeply impressed with the seeming miracle to undertake any experiments with it. Continual prayer was all that was attempted. People ceased to ask their acquaintances to come to the meetings, and the usual revival methods were omitted. Real prayer, sincere singing, and a short comment on some verse of Scripture made up the usual order of services, aside from the regular preaching on Sunday.

Various explanations of this mysterious and systematic manifestation of some hidden spiritual force have been advanced by students of the unusual occurrence. Some undevout friends have rested satisfied with the belief that it was only a coincidence or an accidental repetition of a natural phenomenon. The skeptic said that there was no mystery about it, as it merely "happened so." Others, more devout, declared

that the people must have habitually "let go of their faith" when seven appeared, and that according to their faith "was the limitation of the numbers." Others believed that it must have been, consciously or unconsciously, arranged by persons managing the meeting, and not a few outsiders regarded the statement of the facts as a clear falsehood. They said it could not have been possible, and that there was surely some deception in the arrangements or reports. But the hundreds of intelligent and conscientious people who were present week after week became fully satisfied that it was the work of the Divine Spirit sent in answer to their prayers. Some of the circumstances connected with that large accession to the church will be of interest to the student.

During the years when the building was being constructed many simple schemes were devised by the people to raise money for the work. But prayer was a part of every endeavor. Fairs, suppers, and concerts were

often used to raise funds, and, although a worldly spirit often creeps into church entertainments, there came there a devotional spirit which seemed to transfigure every work. The devotional meetings held in a side hall when the church fairs were going on at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia ever had the same startling result—the unchangeable number, seven, came out for Christ. One evening a specially large number of citizens were at a dinner given to arrange plans for securing the money for the first payment to the contractor who was laying the foundation for the Temple. A visitor, in his speech, said that he had been more interested in the "steady revival," of which he had heard, than in the feast, and that he was quite disappointed to learn that for the first time in three years the church had omitted its weekly prayer meeting to give place to a dinner. Thereupon, Deacon Stoddard, a devout man and full of the Holy Ghost, arose and suggested that before the guests left the table the presiding

officer should give the usual invitation for anyone to arise and declare his decision to follow Christ. After several eloquent and entertaining speeches on general topics the invitation was given for the religious confession, and, to the amazement of many, just seven young men arose. A deep, spiritual emotion filled the hearts of all present. In two or three instances the number was less than seven who responded before the benediction was pronounced, and some said, "The spell is broken." But in all cases another seeker after God appeared before the people left the room. Men, in those cases, rushed to the platform and called for the attention of the company to say that they dared not go home without openly confessing before the people their need of the Saviour. In several instances persons were too much overcome or too timid to stand out before a public meeting, and they persuaded some one sitting near them to get up and ask prayers for them. But there was no prolongation of any service and no outlay of

money for exhorters or singers. Naturally that remarkable condition attracted a throng of people, and before the Temple was opened the church and Sunday-school rooms at Mervine and Berks streets were crowded beyond endurance.

At the first great prayer meeting held in the Temple when the call was made for converts the number who came forward was seventy-seven. From that time (1892) there has been no resumption of a regular number of seekers. Often the number seven, seventy-seven, forty-nine, and seventy appear in the number of those who arose for prayer or in the list of those who were received at the same time into the church. At one Easter service two hundred and seventy-seven were baptized. But those "five years' revivals" stand out as five most beautiful years in the memory of the thousands still living who recall them. All of that company of believers prayed, and on those stormy days when the curious crowd were kept away the people drew to-

gether in sincere devotion, and the most dreary days without were the most happy within. God seemed more reachable and the domestic sweetness of the church home was much more fully appreciated when the snow shadowed the panes, when the wild storms beat on the doors, and when only earnest worshipers ventured out to church. For more than fifteen years three thousand tickets of admission to the regular church services were taken up several days in advance, and when a very stormy day kept many ticket holders away special and repeated prayer was made especially for them. The effect of those stormy days of special prayer was one of the most remarkable experiences of the church life. Letters came in great numbers from different parts of the world, saying that they missed the services, but felt decidedly impressed to send for some needed information or for special religious advice.

Many cathedrals, churches, homes, and charity halls have been built on prayer and

faith, so that the construction of the Baptist Temple, on a prominent corner of Philadelphia's widest street, in the heart of the city, by a few poor people, may not seem strange. Yet the fact that God has prospered other enterprises is only a confirmation of the theory that God answered the prayers of Grace Church in giving providential assistance in the construction of the Temple. When the church voted to go on and pay for the lot and build a church to seat over three thousand in the upper auditorium and two thousand in the lower hall, there was no money in hand or pledged. Yet there was no recklessness, no tempting God in their faith. When the contracts were entered into with the builder, or the furniture manufacturer, provision was made carefully for any contingency. If for any unforeseen reason the great building had been unfinished at any stage of construction all bills would have been paid. But each advance in the work was made after special prayer over each division of the building enter-

prise. The foundation was constructed after special prayer, then came the walls, the roof, the carpenter's inside work, the painting, the furniture, and the organ—each being the object of prayerful consideration. There were a few instances, however, which are worthy of special mention. There was a point when the contract for the stone for the walls was held up by the quarry proprietors, as they feared to venture on so large a job with no guaranty but a mechanic's right of lien. At that time a new savings bank was opened at Columbia Avenue, two squares from the Temple, and President Cummings, head of the bank, offered to assist the church in any safe way. How he came to know of the proposed work, or what special reason he had for helping a people with whom he was not personally acquainted, was never explained. But he was a noble citizen. His influence was itself a powerful aid in all the business of the church. One day a stranger (General Wagner, president of the Third National Bank) was driv-

ing by the half-constructed church when an "impulse" seized him to go into the building under construction. He was a Presbyterian elder and a stranger to all the members of Grace Church. He was a great man of business, a person of unflinching integrity whose coolness in emergencies and whose conservative management of financial institutions made him a trusted authority for private, for city, or for national finances. In a few words of conversation with the contractor in the building General Wagner was told that the church was being built "by faith in prayer." He told General Wagner that thus far "every payment had been made promptly, with nothing left over." From that hour the general was a strong, unmovable friend and backer of the Temple enterprise. The Tenth National Bank and its offspring, the Columbia Trust Company, and the Third National Bank, of which General Wagner was president, were ever safely used as a reference, and often tens of thousands of dollars were

loaned by them to the church for short periods. The trustees and the deacons of the church were prayerful men of stable common sense and successful in their own labor or business. There was no foolish overpiousness, no loud professions of religious fervor, but a determined trust in God's promise to heed the call of those who loved him.

Mr. John Little, a Quaker by inheritance and training, was a leading mind in the affairs of the church and was for many years the treasurer of the Temple University. He was a quiet, keenly modest man, but living a transparent truthfulness and honesty which commanded the confidence of all who knew him and secured for him a love that can never die. He said that he had two special places for prayer, one being in the Temple and the other on the street. Mr. Charles F. Stone (whose wife, Mrs. Maria L. Stone, continued his work after he died) was the treasurer of the church at the critical period and was a man en-

dowed with excellent business ability and a devout man full of good works. He, too, had a "good name" which was rather to be chosen as a financial recommendation than great riches. These men are not mentioned because of their special claim to attention above the others associated with them, but simply as two specimens of the prayer-making company who moved on unhesitatingly, yet carefully, in doing the thing which many declared could not be done. The weekly reports from the committees and individuals showing how God had raised up, unexpectedly or strangely, friends of the undertaking, often caused a deep feeling of awe and sent the people out with fresh determination to work cheerfully on.

A single instance of the many hundreds reported will probably answer the inquiries of others now engaged in some like work. Looking back upon the incident after thirty years the plan or the purpose of the divine leadership, so hidden then, becomes reasonable and clear. Why the

Lord wished to use only three hundred men out of Gideon's great army was not understood at the time, but all can see now that the purpose was to bring the Lord's hand into vision and win for him the recognition which would have gone to the human army.

Only once did the people of the Temple falter and their prayers seem ineffective. Only once did those Philadelphia worshipers limit their faith. But that one period of doubt came when the question was suddenly thrust before the church whether they would try to put in a suitable church organ. Many claimed that they had reached the utmost limit of sacrifice. Some said that the church ought to be fully satisfied if they could buy seats for the first services. Others strongly declared that after all the asking of God and man for aid to build the Temple they could not expect either God or man to help them to buy an unnecessary organ. Through thirty-eight years the church has never had any quarrel to settle in all its history, and that division of opinion

did not assume an angry or excited phase. It was simply a feeling in some of the people that the Lord had done wonders and that, now that the church was out of the wilderness, it was full time to let the people and God's providence rest. When the question arose whether the church should venture to purchase a suitable church organ it was decided by a large majority that it could not be undertaken. The small minority were Gideon's three hundred. One member of that small body asked the church for the privilege of putting in the organ, "if he could raise all of the ten thousand dollars needed without asking a contribution from anyone who had already given or subscribed toward the building." Even that conservative offer was accepted by a reluctant and small majority.

Then that member began a downright, heart-stretching wrestle with the Angel of God. He spent two successive nights in the Temple in hard and tearful prayer. He had nothing to give. He must secure the whole

from others. He pleaded with God to let him work with Him in awakening the hearts of possible givers. But the Lord was not willing to give to man the major part of the glory of success. The murmuring people must be made ashamed of their lack of faith in the Lord who had safely led them thus far. The contract for the organ was made with a company whose agent said they usually sold their organs on faith, but that churches always paid the cost and often paid in advance of the date when the notes matured. The purchaser of the Temple organ did not feel authorized to put in the organ with no money in hand, at least for the first installment on the price to be paid. But all the men he approached refused to give because it was "overdoing it," and was "too improbable" for credence or assistance. But the purchaser did not waver. The time set for the payment of the first fifteen hundred dollars came. The note the purchaser gave was due on Monday. The debtor had asked the Sunday-morning

prayer meeting to remember him especially "on the morrow." He had until three o'clock Monday to raise the money to save his note from protest. He had written to a relative to ask for a loan of fifteen hundred dollars, but the letter had not been sent to the mail box. When he entered his room just before church services a working girl who was a member of the church came quietly to his door and handed him a letter in which, when he opened it, he found a check for fifteen hundred dollars. The letter and check were signed by a laboring man in Massilon, Ohio, who wrote that he had not been asked to give anything, but he had heard that the church "hoped soon to get an organ." He felt impressed to send this check and to ask the church to accept it on the condition that, should he ever be reduced to actual need, the church should endeavor to aid him in some way. The second payment due came as an unexpected draft from Boston for five hundred dollars, which must be honored or refused within

three days. But in the same mail with the notice of the draft came two money orders from the executor of an estate in California, saying that the deceased testator had left the distribution of certain sums to the discretion of the executor and he had decided to send five hundred dollars toward "the music in the new Temple."

The third payment was met by funds raised by solicitation, about which there seemed to be nothing remarkable. Other payments were made by gifts clearly sent in connection with the appeal of the believer, but the last payment was the most unaccountable of all. Three one-hundred-dollar bills were pushed under the door of the church study by some one never discovered, and a certificate of mining stock worth seven hundred dollars was sent from Butte, Montana, without other signature except that on the face of the certificate. The blank for the purchaser of the stock was blank. Public efforts were made to find the givers, but without success. Well

might the people feel that the voice of the organ was the voice of the Saviour.

When the organ was dedicated and Dr. D. D. Wood led the devotion with inspired fingers and sightless eyes the church congregation was a beautiful sight—like a sea sparkling with tears. When the great chorus was singing the hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform," a large number of the singers were so choked with emotion that they ceased to sing and Doctor Wood said the event was one of the most thrilling in all his experiences with choirs.

These are "the simple annals of the poor," but they illustrate and inculcate great principles which are applicable to any work for the Lord.

Healing the Sick

III

Chapter III

Healing the Sick

THE health and happiness of mankind depend in a great degree on faith. Every emotion of the body and every action of the mind is an exhibition of faith. Persons who believe they are well, even if they are ill, will soon recover, and persons who believe that they will not be sick are seldom ill. There is no department of human life so dependent on belief as that connected with health. Millions would arise, take up their couches and walk, if they could be made to believe that they could do so. To believe a falsehood has cured many people, and consciences waver between the duty to tell a patient the clear truth when he is very ill and to make him believe a lie in order that he may get well.

It must also be stated, in fidelity to the truth, that the subject of healing by faith

has called out a host of the half-insane classes who proclaim with trumpet tones some cases of divine healing which are unworthy of a moment's consideration. Hence, out of a collection of possibly sincere letters, many have been rejected altogether as foolish or misleading. Eleven hundred written testimonies to cases of healing in direct answer to prayer at the Baptist Temple have been carefully examined and the trustworthy testimonies tabulated. Those "years of healing" to which reference is so often made were years of prayer and years of faith. After deducting all the questionable cases, and after a wide allowance for the naturally health-giving and health-preserving power, the normal human belief is that there remains an overwhelmingly convincing amount of evidence that healing is directly brought about by sincere prayer.

Through several years cases were reported to the church or pastors which convinced all who knew the people and the circumstances that some intelligent power, higher than

human knowledge, had interfered to heal the sick. But when the knowledge of those trustworthy cases came to be known, and especially when they had awakened much excited comment, then the "cranks" and monomaniacs crowded to the front and vociferously proclaimed the most absurd miracles, to the disgust of reasonable men and women and greatly to the damage of the beneficent work.

Sometimes all references to healing were omitted in the pulpit and shut out from the meetings for prayer until the wild advocates of divine healing settled down and dispassionate views could be taken. Many intelligent devout men repudiated the whole experiment, believing that the excitement over it was doing much more harm than good. But the larger part who saw the people who had been cured by the unexplainable means were steadfast and went on sincerely thanking God for his wonderful works among the children of men.

A digest of the written testimonies showed

that cataracts had unrolled without the touch of a surgeon's knife, although the greatest number of the restoration of sight to the blind were with the aid of apparent means. The methods by which the Lord restored their sight did not make their gratitude to him for restoration any the less commendable. Mysterious and evidently dangerous internal tumors disappeared slowly or suddenly in a manner unexplainable by the most learned physicians.

By far the greatest number of the eleven hundred cases selected for consideration out of the multitude of testimonies were cases in some way directly connected with the nervous system. Patients long confined in an insane asylum were brought home and cured of what had been considered hopeless insanity. There were many cases of various forms of brain diseases, while in all these cases a specially conservative examiner could declare that they might have been cured by the special or wise treatment.

Yet, even if such were the case, the devout

man who prayed may claim that the treatment was only a part of God's healing plan. It was often declared publicly and without any contradiction that for long seasons there was not one person ill in bed in the more than one thousand homes represented in the membership of the church worshiping in the Temple. Usually health reigned in the entire church, and it was reasonably claimed that in five years more than six hundred cases of lung and throat trouble were permanently healed. Epidemics afflicted the city, and, quoting Doctor Haehnlen, it was declared that "the Angel of Death had passed over the congregation, taking none." Of course the people believed that if they went to the Temple to pray for the recovery of their friends they would surely be favorably answered. Many have, however, written that if that condition of faith could be secured in the doctor, nurse, and family, that spirit of hope would be naturally aroused in the patient and aid greatly in the recovery. But the men who pray can say

with greater confidence that in every case it was, at least, God working with man. At all events, the general health of the congregation must be far better than would have been the case with the same people if they had not gone to church and prayed.

Hundreds of men and women live on in health and vigor who were in that congregation at middle age thirty-five years ago. Their strength "is not abated," although some of them were invalids thirty years ago. The healing force of a cheerful faith is everywhere acknowledged to be a health-preserving agency of vital importance in the establishment of public health. It is a vital necessity in thousands of individual cases. Such a condition is probably often a gift of God—through the influence of his suggesting and soothing spirit. Jesus healed many without resorting to miracles and seems to have resorted to the miraculous only to convince his hearers of his authority in divine matters. In some cases, as the woman who touched his garment, he claimed

nothing for himself, but told her that her own faith had served her.

Even the most ultra-conservative critic at the Temple who tried hard to see in these many cases of restoration only the "working out of some natural law" confessed that if his child was sick he "would not dare to omit praying" for its recovery. The conclusion of the whole matter is in the settled conviction in the minds of nearly all the worshipers at the Temple that God does answer prayer for the sick.

Prayer for the Home

IV

Chapter IV

Prayer for the Home

ONE Sunday evening at the usual services the invitation was given, as is customary, for such persons who especially desired to be mentioned in the daily prayers of the people to rise for a moment before the singing of the last hymn. The sermon had not mentioned the need of prayer and contained no special evangelistic appeal. The invitation was the customary proceeding throughout the year. The three thousand seats were all filled. The audience was composed, as usual, largely of men, and they were men of middle age. There were young people, representing both sexes, scattered through the audience, and lines of them along the back rows of seats in the distant gallery. No attempt was made to emphasize the ordinary invitation in any special manner. But when the solemn

moment came for the prayer-seekers to rise the response was so general that the preacher asked those who had risen to remain standing until the pastors could see them and count them. There were over five hundred, and for a few weeks that was about the usual number of those who arose.

But the preacher was especially startled by the fact which he had not especially noted on previous occasions, that the majority of those who asked for prayer were young people. The scene, when those youthful faces appeared on every side and in so large a congregation, filled the soul of the beholder with almost painful awe. It led the preacher to meditate a moment to ask Christ and himself why so many young people took such a solemn, sincere interest in prayer at that time. The thought led him, before the benediction, to request all who had stood forth for prayer to write to him a personal and confidential letter explaining why they desired to be mentioned in the prayers of the Christian people.

The letters came the next week by the hundred. It was an astonishing revelation. The letters from unmarried people were culled out of the collection and reread at leisure. Some of them were in need of higher wages; some were seeking for a personal religious awakening; some asked prayers for friends, for business, for safe journey, for health, or for other protection and relief. But out of two hundred and eighty-seven letters from those young people over two hundred mentioned, directly or indirectly, their strong desire for a husband, a wife, or a home. The details of lovers' quarrels were opened up, the anguish of broken engagements expressed on tear-stained sheets of note paper, and many doubtful lovers wished the Lord would reveal to them whether their choice had been a wise one or whether their love was deep enough for such an extremely important matter as marriage. The letters revealed such a general longing for a home that one seldom realizes is really existent. There were

a few letters from young college women and university men. But the greater portion were from working girls. They were the most touchingly sacred records of the every-day thoughts of young women, all sincerely and modestly expressed. When those young women saw some handsomely gowned wife pass her desk, her counter, her bench, or loom, leading a bright-faced little son, the working girl's soul uttered an unvoiced shriek for a home, for a noble husband's protection, and for children of her own. Women waiters who daily fed the wives of wealthy merchants or of prosperous manufacturers wrote how terrible was the thought that they were going to be homeless and penniless in their old age—one great prayer going up to high heaven for holy domestic love and a place they could call "home."

After that evening's call upon the seekers after God to rise the request for letters was repeated. The answers which came even into thousands revealed the general request

for the leadership of the Spirit of the all-wise God in directing the all-important affairs of the heart. Some letters detailed the horrors of broken hearts; some revealed dark sins; and some told of betrayal or of base and traitorous ingratitude. But the majority were letters from lonely but upright women of high ideals and of noble, Christian life. Some of the communications were from conscientious young men asking God's help in deciding their choice or for the influence of God in their favor when their chosen one should make up her hesitating mind. Some were calls for Christ's forgiveness and for human advice in most complicated cases where the writer had been misunderstood or where he had thoughtlessly made a promise he must recall. All wanted a home. The honest souls standing out in the open before God, where the restraints of human custom and the reluctance of a pure modesty were, for the moment, overcome, wrote out the sincerest prayer of all. Their soul's need was a home.

Of all the holy ambitions of a normal man or woman the purpose to have a home is the highest. A home on earth and a home in heaven constitute the soul's chiefest need. Around that transfigured word gather all that is highest and purest in human thinking and all that is most sacred and heavenly in human feeling. In the beginning the Almighty created man—"Male and female created he them." The first home was in Paradise. The last home will be there. He who has an income to maintain a house, who has an intelligent, unselfish wife, who can look about his table and see children with clear intellects and loving hearts, is conspicuously foolish if he does not see that he already has the best the world can give. She who can cast off all anxiety for maintenance and can devote herself to the care and training of her own little ones, and who can respect and deeply love her chosen mate, has God's best gifts already in her possession. Gratitude to the heavenly Father will lead such recipients of his

richest bounty to forget not to aid those who have less. Nothing on earth of wealth, applause, or mundane wisdom can equal, in the least measure, the temporal and eternal values of a real home. Therefore it is wise and the mark of a godly character to pray heartily for a husband, or for a wife, or for children.

A reasonable valuation of such domestic treasures makes a hideous crime of every violation of the laws and customs which make a loving home possible. Profanity of speech, theft of money, or traitorous breaking of any other contract is a light sin compared with the brutal sins of the libertine or the unchastity of the woman who sells herself, or who, with evil intent, entices a man to home-breaking crime. So important is this matter that it is the fit subject for constant prayer for those who have not chosen to be a martyr or decided to give up all on earth for a home in heaven. And, even in the latter case, the call to take up any work inconsistent with the maintenance of a

home should be overwhelmingly emphatic to command obedience.

Hence, those appeals to Heaven for domestic rest of soul were all normal and all of supreme importance. When that great collection of letters were each answered the reply contained a counter-request for a report in due season which should state when and how the prayer for a home had been answered. Those reports have also been carefully tabulated. But here again the critical adherent to the theory concerning the unchangeable laws of nature tries to escape any committal to religious dogmas by claiming that the mating instinct is an inborn sentiment common to fishes, beasts, and birds, and that mankind mates by accidental acquaintanceship or by the pressure of necessity or ungoverned passion. Such arguments convince many people who deride the claim that "marriages are made in heaven." But after every such theory is suggested and analyzed, after every allowance for the outworking of "natural selec-

tion," there is left an important place for the intrusion or domination of a superhuman power. To that fact, the simple, unvarnished tale of the experience of the years at the Temple bear eloquent testimony. A book of this character requires that out of the many reports only the most representative cases should be selected, and that the mention should be as brief as is consistent with clearness. The number of marriages which every church, small or great, brings about is ever the astonishment of any preacher who goes back over the history of forty years of church life. The church in any community is a center of more or less of social life and furnishes an opportunity for the best young people to meet on a plane of safe association. The married Christian people, and especially the owners of homes, are the very best people in any town or city. As a rule, all people possessed of Christian character marry. The unmarried masses of the people, or those who are most often unhappily mated, are

often the unstable classes who are not closely bound to moral principles. Religious life and home life are twin sisters. They belong to the same family and have the same likes, dislikes, and motives. They are congenial and necessary companions almost everywhere.

Let us examine the leading events wherein we seem to recognize the divine hand and which led directly to the setting up of Christian homes. One lady clerk in a department store, in her first letter asking for prayer, said that she was forty-one years of age and that she had been twenty years in the store. She said that she had hoped for a home all her adult life, but had abandoned the hope and wished only to die soon. She asked if suicide would be wrong under such sad circumstances. The following Sabbath morning, after the service, the pastor of her church incidentally introduced her to a widower of her age who had a comfortable house, but who had rented it because he had no children. The widower asked the pastor

a few days later to pray for him as he had a "very important matter" on his mind. Several days later he came to the minister and said that he had dreamed three times and in each dream he had precisely the same experience. He dreamed that he was climbing a steep hill in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and he had called for help to a lady standing above him near the path, and when he took her hand he recognized her as the lady to whom the minister had introduced him. He declared that he really wished to set up a home again, but his first impression of that lady was decidedly unfavorable. The minister unreservedly advised the widower never to let a mere dream influence him to overcome his calm judgment. The minister said that dreams were often contrary to fair reasoning and should not be consulted in such important matters. A few days later the lady called on the minister to ask him if there was "any truth in dreams." Then she greatly surprised the minister by saying that she dreamed several times that she was

on a steep bank near a cousin's home in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and as the earth began dangerously to break beneath her feet a man caught her and supported her to the safe path. The mysterious thing in her story was that she recognized the man as the gentleman to whom she had been introduced that Sunday morning, but whose name she had forgotten. She said that the repetition of the dream "set her to thinking," and she had called to inquire who the gentleman was and what trust could be placed in dreams. The minister was too surprised to declare again that no faith could be put in any dreams. The minister said nothing to her about his previous interview with the widower and let her depart with the remark that if the Lord intended she should marry that man the Lord would also speak to the man about it in some clear manner. The Lord never advises one party to enter into such a contract when he knows the other party is unwilling. In every holy marriage both parties are equally inspired

with the spirit of God and are both absolutely convinced that the Lord had brought them together. The minister soon wrote to the widower, advising him to call on the lady and tell her frankly that he desired to make her acquaintance with a view to a marriage, if both should be satisfied that it would be right. Every reader of this incident recognizes or feels the impression of the universal law of nature and can prophesy safely that they would marry. The minister was not present at the wedding, but he was informed by those who did attend the ceremony that the bridegroom told the guests the history of their dreams and claimed that they were "obeying the voice of God" when they arranged for that marriage.

The doubting persons who claim that the repetition of the dreams and the accidental meetings were singular coincidences that were in no way influenced by angel spirits, do have enough support to make the angel theory one of faith and remove the claim from the class of "scientific demonstrations."

The facts related cannot be questioned. But the conclusions from those facts may differ widely and still be more or less reasonable.

The mysterious attraction which leads the bird and the beast to choose their mates is of the same nature as that mating instinct which prevails universally among mankind. But man's reasoning power and his self-control make his choice of a wife a far more complicated matter. The healthiest, strongest, and most intellectual races are ever those whose laws and customs allow the greatest opportunity for unprejudiced choice in the selection of life mates. Intermarriage of family relations, or the marriages within a narrow circle of the same race, ever produce weaklings and often idiots. In the lands where the parents arrange all the marriages there is but little progress and but few real homes. Wherever the parties refuse to be guided by the higher law of affinity, or by a recognition of Divine Providence, there will seldom be found a real home. "Affinity" is an abused word, and is often used

to bolster up a bad cause or to excuse a cruel crime. But the close student of anthropology ever finds that the known natural laws do not account for every case, nor can a satisfactory solution of sex attraction in human affairs be found without admitting the mysterious and potent force that is only spiritual.

Looking back over the marriage records of the Baptist Temple for thirty years, there appear some significant facts concerning home-making by prayer. Through those thirty years of the record-keeping there was an average of sixteen marriages a month, or five thousand and one hundred in thirty years. The same pastor who officiated at the marriage of the parents also, in many cases, officiated at the weddings of the children. Not one case of divorce can be discovered and only two cases of estrangement. The records of many praying churches probably show the same conditions.

But it is a sublime, soul-satisfying thing to meditate on such a great list of happy Christian homes. The searcher, when he

notes the birthplaces of bride and groom, finds that they often come from the most distant places and represent nearly all the races of the world. Calcutta united with New York, Iceland with New Orleans, Philadelphia with Chicago, Quebec with Quakertown, Worcester (Massachusetts) with Camden (New Jersey), Japan with Chester (Pennsylvania), Alaska with Columbia (South Carolina), country villages with cities, obscure daughters of prairie farmers with sailors on the Atlantic, millionaires' sons with working girls, and thousands of members of the church of all adult ages uniting with other members of whom they knew nothing in childhood.

From the atheist's point of view he can see nothing in that history but a jumble of accidents or a snarl of events which cannot be untangled. But to the devout believer in the theory that God sends his angels to arrange the home-making as he did in the case of Rebecca and Isaac, that list of homes presents a sublime view of a system for the

kind distribution of Heaven's chiefest blessings. Out of the seventy-two hundred who united with Grace Church and its missions in the thirty years mentioned above all but twenty-nine have been married. As a home-making agency in the history of our nation the churches must hold the leading place.

When the remarkable series of reported dreams became known and was being discussed by the people, there arose many men and women with unbalanced minds who testified to the most inconsistent miracles in connection with their dreams. Among the letters which they sent in when testimonials were called for there were nearly one hundred which related foolish and impossible experiences and which made the whole debate ridiculous. But that uprising of those who were "possessed of evil spirits" did not prove that the one case so well established was not the work of an angel of God.

There may be ten thousand dreams which are of no special value and which are caused by natural law. But God seems to

use only one here and there for his special purposes. Thousands of seeds fall on the earth, but only one may be selected to grow. There were cases related where dreams were specially potent to the dreamers because of the suggestions made by the dreams to the waking minds. A dream is often very potent as a reminder, or as a caution, and is often a providential event used in God's plan, although the dreams in themselves may have nothing unusual about them. There could be no clearly remembered dream which did not have some effect on the thought and later actions of the dreamer. With that view many dreams need not have their origin in a special visit of an angel of God. But again we must believe that there are dreams in which the angel of God appears to man directly, and that such dreams are possible in any age of the human world. Each claim, therefore, to a revelation of God in a dream should stand alone and be accepted or rejected after a careful study of all the causes and effects.

The experiences with the Holy Spirit during those years of constant prayer should find a special place in this record. For there were devout souls who seemed to be constantly filled with the divine afflatus, and they surely enjoyed the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Here, again, we walk near a line that cannot exactly be located and enjoy emotions or inspirations which cannot be described. An all-pervading joy illumined every part of the human soul. "Where are you going so early this Sunday morning?" was often asked of the hastening pedestrian, and it was a common experience to hear him reply, "I am going to the morning prayer meeting in the Temple to meet the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit was there awaiting him. There were Pentecostal days—supreme hours of strange elation, seasons of heavenly bliss which cannot be accounted for on any psychological basis. A holy brooding of a sin-expelling spiritual atmosphere permeated by a power like a perfume.

It was an indwelling of the Spirit which carried a purifying fumigation wherein the worshiper simply let go of himself and rested in the arms of his heavenly Father. Many felt that sacred presence and could only express themselves in tears. Such Pentecostal visitations of the Spirit have doubtless come to thousands of churches and to millions of worshipers in other places, and this experience at the Temple is not mentioned as if it were an unusual thing where prayer is the habit of all the people. But it confirms the history of the visits of the Holy Spirit related in the Bible, and must be accepted as a proof of the fact that there is communication between the spirit world and the world in which we live in the flesh. But these spiritual conditions are so subtle, so elusive, so delicate, that it is easy to imagine that one is in that condition when perhaps he is not. It was so disappointing and perplexing to the sincere and reasonable Christian to have his communication with the Holy Spirit

disturbed by a wild-eyed and loud-mouthed "Holy Roller" or an advocate of "The Holy Ghost and Us Society" proclaim his wild theories and tell of the silly revelations which he claimed the Spirit had made to him. Some of those disturbers are now in the insane asylum, where they should have been before.

> Wherever God erects a house of prayer
> The devil builds a chapel there.
> And 'twill be found on examination
> The latter has the largest congregation.

It is a marvel that the gospel of Christ has outlived its own advocates. The "cranks" who testified for Christ in his day were more harmful than were the same number of his open enemies. Because of them the people believed that Christ himself was a wild fanatic. The believer in Christ must try prayerfully and carefully to distinguish between the devils and the angels of light, and determine by their fruits which claimant is possessed by the Spirit of God and which is controlled by the spirit of evil.

Prayer and the Bible

V

Chapter V

Prayer and the Bible

THERE are three methods used distinctively in the study of the Bible and upon each of them prayer has a clear effect. This fact comes out fully in the written testimonials received from the members of the church worshiping in the Baptist Temple. One individual may read the Bible as he would read any other book, and, consequently, finds it dull reading. Another studies the historical references as an archæologist or as the scientific specialists examine a rare specimen. To them it is a curious and strange collection of ancient manuscripts, and such a student finds amusement in the research. Another regards the Book as a miraculous revelation from God, and he handles the volume with reverent care and reads the statements it contains as he would a letter sent from

heaven direct to him. Those three classes are found in almost every religious gathering, and it is an intensely interesting thing to observe at close range the various effects of prayer on such a congregation. When the leader of the prayer service approaches the Bible with the manner of a delighted seeker after truth, and, before opening the Book, leads the people in a direct appeal to the Divine Spirit for instruction and inspiration, the interest of the worshipers in the Book is especially awakened. When the leader prays fervently and with frank sincerity that the passages of the Bible to be read shall be illumined or be made alive with special meaning and new emphasis, then the Book will be an interesting volume to nearly all of the gathering. And when the leader is himself expecting a special revelation from that Book at that time his personal magnetism combines with his manner to help the worshiper into a receptive, expectant state of mind. The people then expect to hear "an important message from

a most important person." The helpfulness of those conditions anyone would understand, as they are in accord with human experience in other gatherings. But the effect of the prayer in bringing to each person present a different message from the same verse puts the matter over into the realm of the supernatural.

At one prayer meeting at the Temple, when a severe storm had cut down the attendance to a number under twenty, the prayerful attitude of all present made the session one of special spiritual illumination. The Scriptures were read with accuracy and natural emphasis, and then each listener was requested to state informally what was the chief lesson which the reading brought to him. Each person present received a distinct and helpful suggestion differing from the suggestions made to any of the others. It is that well-established fact, so often experienced, that makes the Bible a book unlike any other. In this, too, is shown the importance of persuading every-

one to read the Bible for and by himself. It seems, however, to be universally true that when the Bible is prayerfully, intelligently read aloud each praying listener receives some message of special importance to himself. While all that evening heard the same words from the same mouth, yet the circumstances of each life were different from every other; the experiences had been unlike, the inherited dispositions were different, the meaning of the words was shaded by the variation in their home use, and a full allowance was freely made for those differing effects. But those considerations cannot, to the calm, critical student of the inspiration of the Bible, account for the special and mysterious messages which come to each participant in the meeting. The suggestions are often beyond the application of the law of "the association of ideas." They cannot be explained by any of the known psychological laws which seem generally to govern the human mind. This experience with the Bible is the best evidence

of its divine inspiration. Archæological, psychological, etymological, or historical analysis cannot establish the accuracy of the Bible so surely as that actual experience. The best proof is subjective. The secular argument that the Bible carries on its face the evidence that the writers were all inspired by a "good motive" is surely an excellent reason for believing the Bible to be "inspired." A holy motive, apparent in its wise communications, is clearly shown in the Bible. The etymologist who rests his case on the conclusion that the words "inspired by God" were formerly written "inspired by the Good," and that the "All Good" being is the ideal God, is not far from the safe definition. That does not in any way conflict with the theory that "all Scripture, inspired by the 'All Good,' is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The complications into which the narrow theologian or technical philosopher falls when attempting to reason about the Almighty often

makes the study bewildering and unprofitable. The testimony of the good and great through all the ages that every line of the Book is written with the unselfish purpose to do good is sufficient warrant for the common reader in concluding that it has some unusual inspiration.

The question was often discussed at the Temple whether it was safe after prayer to open the Bible at random and be guided by the first verse on which the eye rested. Some claimed that it was always safe to trust it. Others said that it was only occasionally that they found it to be reasonably instructive. Still others believed that the ascribing of such magic, or miraculous, power to the Book was clearly a form of forbidden idolatry. But the majority of the praying Bible readers felt convinced that the selection of texts at random could not be trusted. Yet here again we find strong evidence that sometimes the worshiper is directed to a particular record which seems to be selected by a divine mind. Again, it

is wholly a matter of faith. The boy who asked his father for a silver dollar and found one in the road which some traveler had accidentally dropped, concluded that there was no design on the part of his father to give him the dollar. But when he found a dollar there the third time his conclusion that his father had placed all three of the dollars there for him was not unreasonable, but, nevertheless, erroneous. So while the Lord surely has established certain laws or customs which seem permanent, yet he has the power and may change the laws or allow exceptions, and one cannot believe in prayer without believing that such changes are sometimes made. It is a far greater strain upon human credulity not to believe it than it is to believe it. The careful use of common sense in the interpretation of Biblical or unusual events, examples, and records of wisdom is ever the safe and sane proceeding. If one should pray for divine direction and opened the Bible at random to find the

Lord's advice he should always examine the verse to see if its teaching or direction accorded with his petition. In a "call" to the ministry there must be a conviction of duty in the soul and also a road providentially opened to the would-be laborer. So in all the thousands of answers to prayer at the Temple there was found a conjunction of circumstances which showed that the worker was called by the same Lord who had a work to be done.

The will of man is a strong force and is in itself an effectual, fervent prayer. The Lord prospers the person whose righteous will is decided, persistent, and uncompromising. The too-frequent consultation of Bible texts for hints or for direction shows a habit of doubt which is often a clear evidence of weakness. But in this, as in almost every other experiment, it is the consensus of opinion that the Lord does often inspire the Bible, especially for certain devout seekers, and that he inspires the soul with a keen, sensitive apprehension

and appreciation of the special revelation. The spiritually minded man or woman is the only one who can interpret a spiritual book. The chief value of the Bible is as a spiritual guide. It is the only book which explains the Creator's revelation to this world, and is the only one which gives a trustworthy description of the spiritual world. What a shadow would pass over the earth, and what destruction, devastation, and misery would be experienced, if, in one moment, all knowledge of the Bible were crossed out! Sane men who reverently pray for the inspiration when they read the Scriptures are the only safe guides to its sacred meaning. All who came to the Temple to pray seem to have been lead to the Bible at once, and thousands have learned to love it. To those who have prayed l ng over it it has become a continual feast.